

CITY OF CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA**NUMBER: 2.24****ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION****EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/30/2019****SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES -
TUITION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
REIMBURSEMENT AND GED
ADVANCEMENT POLICY****SUPERSEDES: 5/29/2015****I. PURPOSE**

The City of Chesapeake values continued education and considers it a vital part of employee development. The Tuition and Skills Development Reimbursement and GED Advancement Policy is designed to attract and retain qualified employees for service within the City. The Tuition and Skills Development Reimbursement and GED Advancement Program established by this policy (the Program) encourages employees to improve effectiveness in their job performance as well as to prepare for a reasonable promotional objective within the City in the same job series. The Program is not intended to replace department-specific training or courses provided by the Department of Human Resources. It is also not intended to replace costs that may be covered by departmental budgets, such as license renewals. While the City supports lifelong learning, education, and/or certification attainment, there is no guarantee of promotion or transfer.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

The Department of Human Resources is responsible for the administration of this Policy. All references to the Director of Human Resources, and department/agency head shall include their designee.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Accredited Institution** is defined as college or university accredited by an Accrediting Agency or state agency nationally recognized by the Secretary of Education or the Council on Higher Education Reimbursement. A listing of nationally recognized accrediting agencies can be found at www.ed.gov.
- B. **Job Series** is defined as a group of jobs that use similar skills and build on an employee's competencies (e.g., Motor Equipment Operator III and Crew Leader are in the same job series).
- C. **General Educational Development (GED)** is defined as a group of four subject tests which, when passed, certify that the test taker has achieved high school-level academic skills.
- D. **GED Advancement Application** is defined as the application which is to be submitted prior to applying for a GED program.

- E. **Educational Reimbursement** is defined as financial aid received from other sources, including (but not limited to) non-City government agencies, organizations, businesses, or associations that award scholarships, internships, grants and/or veterans' benefits (e.g., GI Bill).
- F. **Immediate Family Member** is defined as the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent.
- G. **Involuntary Separation** is defined as dismissal from employment including disciplinary termination, Reduction in Force (RIF), and separation for failure or inability to meet essential job requirements (e.g., loss of driver's license for positions that require driving, medical disqualification from performing essential job functions).
- H. **Tuition Reimbursement Application** is defined as the application which is to be submitted upon completion of coursework with proof of grade attainment or program completion.
- I. **Voluntary Separation** is defined as departure from employment due to resignation or retirement.

IV. ELIGIBILITY

- A. Regular full-time employees whose salaries are administered by the City's compensation plan, and who have completed one (1) year of continuous service, and worked 2,080 hours as of the date their course starts, will be eligible to participate in the Program.
- B. Regular part-time employees whose salaries are administered by the City's compensation plan, and who have completed two (2) years of continuous service, and worked 2,080 hours as of the date their course starts, will be eligible to participate in the Program.
- C. Employees must have an evaluation rating of 'Solid Performance' or better to qualify for the Program.
- D. An employee who is serving an extended probationary period due to performance or conduct concerns will not be eligible to participate in the Program.

V. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- A. Under this policy, the City of Chesapeake will provide reimbursement to an eligible employee who has completed coursework in a degree or skills development program, and advancement of funds for a general educational development program.
- B. During each fiscal year, the amount awarded to all qualifying applicants will be contingent on funds that are appropriated towards this Program.

- C. Applications for course approval will be due on a date set by the Director of Human Resources. All applications will be reviewed and applicants will receive notification whether their request was approved or disapproved. If funding is available beyond the initial due date, another application period may be opened.

VI. PROGRAM TYPES AND PROVISIONS

A. Degree Program

1. The eligible employee must be enrolled in a nationally accredited institution, college, or university and pursuing coursework that leads to the attainment of an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree.
2. The eligible employee must provide a copy of the course/program requirements upon application.
3. Attainment of a doctoral degree must be approved by the Director of Human Resources. It must be determined that the pursuit of this degree is necessary and beneficial to the demands of the employee's current position or position advancement in the same job series.
4. Tuition reimbursement shall not exceed \$1,275 for an associate's degree, \$1,600 for an undergraduate degree, and \$2,125 for graduate and/or post-graduate degree per person, per fiscal year.

B. Skills Development Program

1. The eligible employee will be registered or enrolled in a skills development program with the primary intention of pursuing a professional certificate or license.
2. A skills development preparatory course is a course or series of courses in which an individual learns the fundamentals of his/her certification/license before taking a certificate/licensing examination. In order to be reimbursed for a skills development preparatory course, the course must be taken within the same fiscal year as the certification/licensing exam. The employee must pass the certification/licensing exam to be reimbursed for the preparatory course, as well as the certification/license.
3. Reimbursement will not exceed \$550 per person, per fiscal year. This can include the cost of application and examination fees.
4. Recertification and/or license renewal is not covered under this policy.

C. General Educational Development (GED) Program

1. The eligible employee shall be registered or enrolled in a GED program with the primary intent of obtaining a GED Certificate.
2. Employees participating in the GED program will be eligible for advancement not to exceed \$250. This can include the cost of preparation and examination fees.
3. The employee must submit a completed GED Advancement Application along with proof of registration and the invoice of tuition costs to the Department of Human Resources no later than four calendar weeks prior to the beginning of the course.
4. Within one calendar week of receiving the completed GED Advancement Application, the Department of Human Resources will determine the eligibility of the request. The employee will receive a memorandum outlining the status of the application. If the application is approved, it will be forwarded to the Department of Finance for processing.
5. Within two calendar weeks of receiving the completed GED Advancement Application, the Department of Finance will forward the processed Tuition Assistance check to the appropriate employee.
6. The employee must present the check to the educational institution for tuition payment.
7. Within 30 days of completion of the course, the employee must submit a copy of grades in order to comply with the provisions of this policy. A passing grade must be obtained in order to receive payment for the GED. Failure to obtain the minimum grade requirements and/or submit official documentation of grade will require repayment of the GED advancement.

VII. REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS

- A. Courses must be approved prior to the start date of the course.
- B. The application must include classes that the employee will take during the full fiscal year, to include those in the fall, spring, and summer sessions. Applications may include courses for which the employee has not yet registered, but the credit hours and tuition cost must be reflected on the application.
- C. Each course or degree program must be related to the employee's present position with the City or a reasonable promotional objective as determined by the employee's supervisor and approved by the Director of Human Resources.

- D. For all degree programs, applicants must obtain a minimum grade of "C" for undergraduate courses and a grade of "B" for graduate courses, unless enrolled under special status, in which case the applicant must obtain an equivalent satisfactory grade upon completion. The employee's coursework under a degree program must receive a grade in order to be approved for reimbursement.
- E. Reimbursement will be 100% for an A or B and 50% for a C for undergraduate courses. Graduate courses will only be reimbursed with attainment of an A or B, and will be reimbursed at 100%.
- F. In order to be reimbursed for a skills development program, the employee must pass any examination that is necessary in attaining the professional certification or license.
- G. All courses must be attended outside the employee's scheduled work hours. The City will not consider the time spent taking the course or any associated study/research time as compensable work time, unless otherwise directed by the employee's department head with prior approval of the Director of Human Resources.

VIII. CRITERIA FOR APPLICATION REVIEW

Consideration in the review of applications for reimbursement may include, but not be limited to, employees who have already demonstrated substantial commitment to their educational goals as well as to the organization, either in their current positions or in other City related activities, and are seeking a degree, license or certificate, or coursework which has been determined relevant and desirable in terms of future City needs. The coursework must increase the employee's knowledge, skill and ability relative to his/her current job and/or subsequently enhance his/her advancement opportunities in the same job series, as determined by the Director of Human Resources.

IX. CHANGES, CANCELLATIONS, OR NON-FULFILLMENT OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. In the event the employee elects to register for a different course than the one approved, the employee is required to submit a new Tuition Reimbursement Application to the Tuition Reimbursement Plan Coordinator for approval. If approved, official proof of registration, payment, and the final grade attained or proof of successful completion for pass/fail courses will be required prior to reimbursement.
- B. An employee must notify the Tuition Reimbursement Plan Coordinator within seven (7) calendar days of dropping/cancelling a course or failing to fulfill the course requirements.

X. REPAYMENT SCHEDULE

- A. In the event an employee voluntarily or involuntarily separates from the City, the employee is responsible for the repayment of the reimbursement or advancement as outlined in the table below:

<u>Separation Date</u>	<u>Repayment Amount</u>
1-90 calendar days of reimbursement or advancement from the City	100%
91-180 calendar days of reimbursement or advancement from the City	75%
181-270 calendar days of reimbursement or advancement from the City	50%
271-365 calendar days of reimbursement or advancement from the City	25%
366 + calendar days of reimbursement or advancement from the City	0%

- B. Repayment will not be required if the employee is subject to a Reduction in Force (RIF); in the event of an employee's death; due to the serious illness/injury of the employee; or due to the serious illness/injury of an employee's immediate family member.
- C. Repayment may be waived with proper documentation of serious illness/injury of the employee or employee's immediate family member.

XI. PROCESSING TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENTS

- A. For degree programs, an employee must submit a Tuition Reimbursement Request with a copy of the final grade(s) and a copy of the tuition payment to the Department of Human Resources within thirty (30) calendar days after completion of an approved course.
- B. For skills development, an employee must submit to the Department of Human Resources, within thirty (30) calendar days, a Tuition Reimbursement Request, documentation that clearly demonstrates a passing score or attainment of the professional certification or license, and a receipt reflecting the certification or license cost.
- C. Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the employee's Tuition Reimbursement Request, appropriate payment receipts, and satisfactory grade/passing score/attainment of certification/license, Human Resources staff will submit documentation to the Department of Finance for payment.
- D. Within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt of approved documentation from the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Finance will forward the processed tuition reimbursement payment to the employee.

XII. EXCLUSIONS/LIMITATIONS

- A. In the event that the employee receives tuition reimbursement from another government agency, organization, or association (e.g. Veterans' Benefits, Grants, Scholarships), he/she will be reimbursed the difference between what the employee receives from the other source and the total tuition expense, up to the maximum allowable amount as stated in this policy.
 - 1. Educational assistance covering additional expenditures other than tuition shall not reduce the amount of tuition reimbursement from the City pursuant to this policy.
 - 2. Failure to report any outside financial reimbursement, grants, or scholarships will require the employee to repay all sums expended by the City for the year(s) in which the outside financial reimbursement, grants, or scholarships were received by the employee. Such failure to report may result in disciplinary action.
 - 3. Receipt of student loans will not preclude an employee from receiving tuition reimbursement.
- B. Tuition reimbursement will not be provided for course cancellations.
- C. Reimbursement will not be provided for laboratory fees, internet fees, textbooks, supplies, transportation, parking, or any other expense or fee associated with the course(s).

XIII. TAXES

Employees should consult with a tax professional to determine whether tuition reimbursement is considered income and may be subject to taxation.

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CONTENT:



Dana E. Sanford, Deputy City Attorney

5.24.2019
Date

APPROVED AND ADOPTED:



James E. Baker, City Manager

5/30/19
Date